

*Dublin Grand Opera Society*

*Winter Season*

28th November to 10th December, 1983

at the

Gaiety Theatre, Dublin

*La  
Traviata*



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# LA TRAVIATA

Opera in Three Acts

Libretto by Francesco Maria Piave from the play *La Dame aux Camélias* by  
Alexandre Dumas, fils.

Music by Giuseppe Verdi.  
(Property of G. Ricordi and Co.)

## Characters in order of appearance

VIOLETTA VALERY, *a demi-mondaine* ..... SUZANNE MURPHY  
BARON DOUPHOL, *her protector* ..... PETER McBRIEN  
DOCTOR GRENVIL ..... SEÁN MITTEN  
FLORA BERVOIX, *a friend of Violetta* ..... THÉRÈSE FEIGHAN  
MARQUIS D'OBIGNY ..... FRANK O'BRIEN  
GASTON, VISCOUNT DE LETORIERES .... BRENDAN CAVANAGH  
ALFREDO GERMONT,  
*a young provincial gentleman in Paris* ..... BERARDINO DI DOMENICO  
ANNINA, *Violetta's maid* ..... MONICA CONDRON  
GIUSEPPE, *Violetta's servant* ..... SEÁN OSBORNE  
GIORGIO GERMONT, *Alfredo's father* ..... ATTILIO D'ORAZI  
A MESSENGER ..... JOHN CARNEY  
SERVANT TO FLORA ..... SEÁN OSBORNE  
*Ladies and gentlemen, Friends of Violetta and Flora, Gypsies, Servants.*

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Stage Director: PATRICK McCLELLAN

Assistant Director: JOSEPHINE SCANLON

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Costumes by C. & W. May, London.

Miss Murphy's costumes on loan from Welsh National Opera.

THERE WILL BE THREE INTERVALS OF FIFTEEN MINUTES

A WARNING BELL WILL RING FIVE MINUTES AND THREE MINUTES PRIOR TO  
THE END OF EACH INTERVAL.

La Traviata received its Première at Teatro La Fenice, Venice, on 6th March, 1853.

## CREDITS

Furnitures & Carpets, Orken Bros.; Cane Furniture, Blind Craft; Table Appointments, O'Byrnes;  
Artificial Flowers, Maeve Prunty.



# LA TRAVIATA

Time: About 1850  
Place: In an near Paris

## ACT I

### A Salon in Violetta's House

A party is in progress to which Violetta welcomes Flora and her other friends. Among them is Baron Douphol, an old admirer of hers. Gaston, another friend, enters and brings with him Alfredo, introducing him to Violetta as one who has long admired her. Beneath her gay manner she is touched. As the guests are about to go to dance, Violetta is seized with coughing. She asks her guests to proceed to the dance, but, as she looks in a mirror and sees how pale she is, she finds that one guest has stayed with her. It is Alfredo, who declares that he has loved her from afar for a year. Gaston calls from the other room, and Violetta dismisses Alfredo tenderly.

The other guests return and take their leave. Alone, Violetta reflects on Alfredo. She seems to see a new, purer life in what Alfredo offers to her. But finally she declares — 'Free as ever'.

### Interval

## ACT II

Scene I: Violetta's country house near Paris.  
Three months later.

Alfredo and Violetta have now settled in a country villa. Annina, Violetta's servant, tells Alfredo that she has been in Paris on Violetta's instructions, selling her mistress's possessions, in order to pay for the idyllic life they have been living. Alfredo ashamed immediately leaves for Paris to attend to their finances.

Violetta enters and receives a letter from Flora inviting her to a dance that evening. She is expecting a caller on business, but there enters Giorgio Germont, Alfredo's father, he comes to denounce Violetta, for squandering his son's money — but discovers that, after all, it is Violetta who has had to sell her possessions. His daughter, he explains, faces the breaking of her engagement because of Alfredo's 'disgrace'. He asks Violetta to leave Alfredo but not to tell him why. At first she refuses, but eventually she sadly consents, asking Germont only that he should tell his daughter that someone made such a sacrifice. Violetta writes a note telling Alfredo that she has left him — without explanation, so that he will think her false to him. Violetta rings the bell and is about to give Annina the note for Alfredo when Alfredo himself enters. Passionately she asks Alfredo to love her as she loves him. She

leaves. He does not understand what is happening until a messenger gives him a letter. It is Violetta's, saying she has left him. In anguish, he sees his father enter. Germont attempts to console his son and proposes to take him home again. But Alfredo suspects that Violetta has gone to Douphol. Seeing the letter which Violetta received from Flora he resolves to go to the party, and take his revenge.

### Interval

Scene II: Flora's Salon in Paris. Shortly afterwards

Flora's party has begun. Suddenly Alfredo enters and joins a group of card-players. Violetta enters, on Baron Douphol's arm. Alfredo, who is winning at cards, makes insulting remarks which can only be taken to refer to Violetta. Tension rises between him and the baron and a duel seems imminent.

Left alone with Alfredo, Violetta asks him to leave for his safety's sake. Alfredo's fury only rises. She then tells him she loves the baron. He calls in the other guests, insults Violetta, and tells them to witness (flinging a purse at Violetta) that he has now paid his debts in full. While the other guests show their indignation at Alfredo's behaviour, Giorgio Germont enters and denounces his son's conduct. In the final ensemble the miserable Violetta is heard affirming that she loves Alfredo still.

### Interval

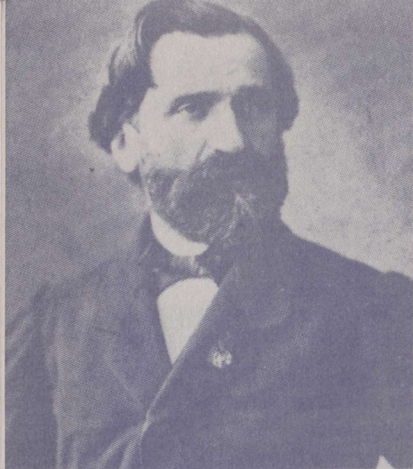
## ACT III

Violetta's Apartment in Paris, some time later

Violetta, separated from Alfredo is living alone with the devoted Annina; she is ill with consumption and they have hardly any money left. She is in bed when early in the morning the doctor comes to see her. He reassures her, but tells Annina that Violetta has really only a few hours to live. Annina leaves and Violetta re-reads a letter she had received from Giorgio Germont, revealing that he has told Alfredo of Violetta's sacrifice and that Alfredo is coming to beg her forgiveness. Annina returns and admits a visitor: Alfredo. All bitterness is forgotten as the lovers embrace. He speaks of taking her away. But after the exhilaration Violetta feels weak. She realises that she is going to die. Giorgio Germont enters. Violetta gives Alfredo a medallion, asking him to give it to the girl he eventually marries.

Suddenly her agitation leaves her. Reliving the joyful first moments of their love, Violetta dies.





## Giuseppe Verdi

Giuseppe Verdi was born on Sunday, 10th of October, 1813, in Le Roncole, near Busseto in the Duchy of Parma, the only son of Carlo Giuseppe Verdi and his wife Lugia. He had one sister who died at seventeen. When he was ten, he went to Busseto to study with Ferdinando Provesi, organist and choirmaster of the Church of San Bartolomeo, due to the kindness of his very first and great benefactor, Antonio Barezzi. Barezzi was a prosperous grocer and wine merchant of Busseto and became a second father to Verdi, who in return revered and loved him all his life. He

made it possible for Verdi to go to Milan to study composition and there to find his true vocation, as when not studying composition — Verdi was studying opera. He spend all his spare time in the opera houses in Milan. He had a season ticket for the Scala, and went regularly to the Teatro Carcano and the Canobbiana as well. He studied the operas before and after from scores he had rented, and he played them over on a piano which can be seen today at the La Scala museum. He returned to Busseto when he had completed his studies and married Margherita Barezzi on May 14th, 1836. The marriage was brief and happy, a mere four years. Two children were born of the marriage and died in 1838 and 1839 and then Margherita died in June 1840. This tragedy marked Verdi for life. His first opera had its première at the Scala in 1839 — *Oberto*, and when his wife died he was already working on his second one — *Un Giorno di Regno*, then followed *Nabucco* and his career was well and truly lauched.

*La Traviata* was written in 1852-53 when Verdi was thirty-nine. Much of it was written while composing *Il Trovatore*. He had accepted an offer from the Fenice, Venice, to compose a new opera for the Spring of 1853; and he and Piave, the librettist, corresponded over possibilities for the libretto, finally *La Dame aux Camélias* was chosen and *La Traviata*, as we know it today, was born.

It is possible that Verdi saw the play while in Paris negotiating about a new work with the Opéra, and perhaps had read the novel. Since he wished for something, “*simple*”, *moving and passionate*” to follow the tragic gloom of *Rigoletto* and *Travatore*, *La Dame aux Camélias* seemed to be the ideal subject.

*La Traviata* has an interesting background, in which fact and fiction abound. Violetta did exist. The story is based on the life of an actual peasant girl who became famous among the sophisticated elite of Parisian society of 1840. She was born Rose Alphonsine Plessis on 15th January 1824 at Nonant, arrived in Paris when she was about fifteen and became the mistress of the Minister of Foreign Affairs under Napoleon III. She became Marie Dupless, was known to be intelligent and beautiful, with a natural dignity, which enabled her to mix with the aristocracy, artists and intellectuals of that time. During a visit to London in February 1846, she married Vicomte de Perregaux who in less than a year bought her grave at Montmarte Cemetery. She lived just twenty-three years, dying from consumption in 1847, but remaining immortal — the late Ernest Newman wrote of her — “*A greater feminine mystery the world has perhaps never known*”.

She had many rich lovers, among them Musset, Litz and Dumas himself.



Much of Dumas' novel, from which he adapted the play, is strongly autobiographical, and so it is very reasonable to presume that Marie Duplessis became Marguerite Gautier and Alexandre Dumas fils became Armand Duval and Verdi and Piave recreated them as Violetta and Alfredo.

Dumas met her in 1844, and they did spend a short idyll in the country, but contrary to Verdi's libretto of Alfredo's Père ending the affair, the truth was in reality that Dumas was unable to finance her life style. In August 1845 he wrote to her *"I am not rich enough to love you as I would wish, and not poor enough to be loved as you would desire. So let both of us forget — you a name which should be almost indifferent to you, I a happiness that has become impossible for me. There is no need for me to tell you that I am sad, since you know already how much I love you, Adieu then. You have too much heart not to understand why I write this letter and too much intelligence not to be able to pardon me for it"*

He went to Spain and North Africa with his father and some friends to forget, and on returning to France in 1847 he learned of her death. To expiate his pain and anguish he made their affair the subject of a novel, calling it *"La Dame aux Camélias"* after the flowers Marie loved because of their delicate perfume.

Verdi at this time was living with Giuseppina Strepponi, who was to become his second wife, and experiencing all the difficulties of living in a small, closeknit community in such a relationship, and seems to have had a particular affinity for the Dumas play. He composed some of his finest music for this score. Violetta's character is beautifully drawn. Gay, restless, vivacious at the beginning of Act One, she finds love, it changes her, she sacrifices it — all the despair and pain of Act Three, culminating in her death, beautifully illustrated in the score. One can listen to *La Traviata* for the first time and find the music telling its own story in such a masterly way, all is revealed. Not for nothing is *La Traviata* such a huge success — this opera which failed so dismally at the Première is possibly one of the most performed operas of all time. A score full of melody and pathos, possessing great humanity, Verdi at his greatest. An opera for all men — for all time.

Caroline Phelan.




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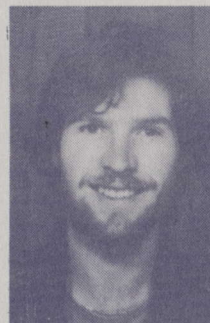
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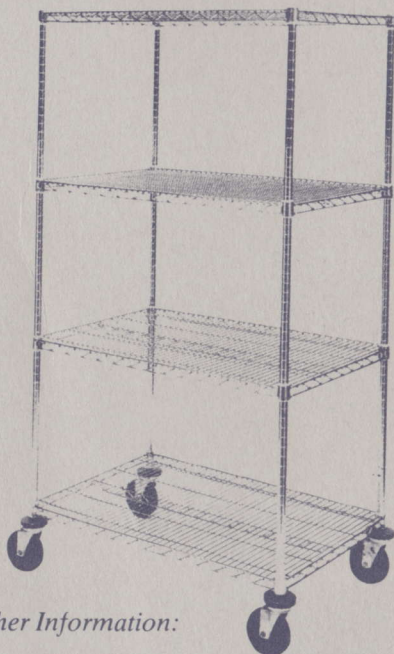
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